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ABSTRACT

The student text explains stress factors and aids in the development of a personalized stress management program for rural special educators. The text is designed to help teachers analyze personal characteristics that relate to stress producing situations, reasons contributing to those personal characteristics, personal and professional effects of stress, and personal characteristics that need change. Also the text helps teachers design for themselves a relevant stress reduction plan. Following an introduction to stress and stress management, the text is divided into three major sections which discuss stress causes for rural special educators and stress reduction through cognitive, affective, and physiological methods. The three sections use worksheets contained in an appendix to help teachers explore various stress reduction methods. Suggested cognitive activities include identifying stress patterns, recognizing emotions, applying an emotional continuum to stress reduction, identifying currently used stress reduction methods and resources, and practicing new methods. Suggested affective stress reduction activities include structuring appropriate releases for anger, structuring a social support group, building positive attitudes, and desensitizing oneself to anxiety-producing situations. Physiological methods of stress reduction focus on increasing circulation, relaxation techniques, and nutrition. The text includes a reading list. (SB)

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STUDENT TEXT FOR THE CURRICULUM MODULE:

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS AND STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE SURVIVAL AS A RURAL SPECIAL EDUCATOR

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	Acknowledgements	i
I.	Introduction to Stress Concepts and Effects for Rural Special Educators	1
	A. Dynamics of Stress	1
	B. Designing a Personalized Master Plan for Stress Reduction	3
II.	Cognitive Methods of Reducing Stress	4
	A. Introduction to Techniques	4
	B. Identifying Stress Patterns	4
	C. Recognizing Emotions	7
	D. Identifying Stress Reduction Methods and Resources	11
	E. Identifying and Practicing Other Stress Reduction Tools	12
	1. If You Can't Change It, Don't Worry About It!	13
	2. Control Your Own Life	13
	3. Remember the 80-10-10 Principle	13
	4. Plan and Implement Change Strategies	15
	5. Be Viewed as an Integral Part of The Community and Educational System	16
	6. Recognize Power and Communication Systems	17
	7. Analyze Existing Power & Communication Systems	18
	8. Understand What Makes People Tick	19
	9. Negotiate for Your Point of View	20
	10. Turn Negatives into Positives	21
	F. Self-Assessment Using Cognitive Strategies	22
III.	Affective Methods of Stress Reduction	23
	A. Introduction to Techniques	23
	B. Structure Appropriate, Non-Threatening Releases for Anger	23
	C. Structure a Social Support Group	25
	D. Build Positive Co-Worker Relationships	25
	E. Enhance Your Attitude	26
	F. Desensitize Yourself to Anxiety-Provoking Situations	28
IV.	Physiological Methods of Stress Reduction	30
	A. Introduction to Techniques	30
	B. Increasing Circulation	30
	C. Relaxation Techniques	31
	D. Nutritional Approaches	33
	E. Applying Physiological Methods of Stress Reduction	33
V.	Summary	35
VI.	Suggested Readings	37
VII.	Bibliography	38

VIII. Appendix A - Work Sheets..... 39
A. Task Sheet One - Identifying Your Stress Patterns..... 40
B. Task Sheet Two - Developing Strategies to Change Stress Factors..... 41
C. Task Sheet Three - Alleviating Effects of Stresses That Are "Givens"..... 42
D. Task Sheet Four - Understanding The Relationship of Stress to The Continuum of Emotions..... 43
E. Task Sheet Five - Understanding The Relationship of Stress to The Continuum of Emotions..... 44-45
F. Task Sheet Six - Relating Your Stress to The Continuum of Emotions..... 46
G. Task Sheet Seven - Current Stress Reduction Methods and Resources..... 47
H. Task Sheet Eight - Identifying Communication Systems..... 48-51
I. Task Sheet Nine - Assessing the Community Power Structure..... 52
J. Task Sheet Ten - Identifying and Developing Relationships With Key Communicators..... 53
K. Task Sheet Eleven - Designing Strategies to Use With Key Communicators..... 54
L. Task Sheet Twelve - Techniques of Enhancing Self-Concept That Can Be Used With Other Professionals In Your School..... 55
M. Task Sheet Thirteen - Negotiate..... 56-59
N. Task Sheet Fourteen - Creating and Optimally Using All Resources for Change..... 60-63
O. Task Sheet Fifteen - Self Assessment Regarding Working With The Educational Community..... 64-65
P. Task Sheet Sixteen - Desensitize Yourself to Anxiety-Provoking Situations..... 66-67

IX. Appendix B - Sample Field-Tested Strategy of Exchanging Personnel and Enhancing Attitudes..... 68

I. INTRODUCTION TO STRESS CONCEPTS AND EFFECTS FOR RURAL SPECIAL EDUCATORS

The introductory material which follows will require approximately fifteen minutes to review. Stress will be defined and its dynamic attributes discussed. Implications of stress for the rural special educator will be noted. A discussion of the objectives involved in designing your Personalized Master Plan for Stress Reduction will conclude the introductory material.

A. Dynamics of Stress

Stress has been defined as a constraining force or influence which results in a state of bodily or mental tension, (Webster's 1981). Stress may lead to either functional or dysfunctional behavior.

Stress tends to alter an individual's existing equilibrium. This is why persons experiencing stress usually feel less mentally or emotionally stable or self-restoring. Currently, researchers debate whether stress is the cause or the result of disequilibrium. Both points of view have validity as stress can be internally generated by or externally imposed upon an individual.

A rural resource teacher may induce stress by consistently working 75 hours a week to design lesson plans for all children in the district with special learning needs because many of the students should not be classified as "special education students" but have teachers who do not know how to identify appropriate educational materials for them. This is an example of an internally generated stress. Externally imposed stress includes that occurring when one's school board votes not to support the special education program.

Whether external or internal, causative or resultant, stress can compel an individual to perform or avoid some action. The "flight or fight" reactions of our primitive ancestors were reactions to stress.

Throughout life, all individuals are subjected to stressful forces. These forces may be acute or insidious. Acute stress forces include facing death of a loved one or a previously unknown but impending deadline. Both of these examples can create individual disequilibrium. Fortunately, societal values dictate rallying support to aid the individual in re-establishment of equilibrium. A system for management of acute stress is therefore not only supported by societal values but is usually implemented by society. Providing words of encouragement or assuming a peer's duties are examples of socially sanctioned support.

But what of insidious stress? Insidious stress refers to the reoccurence of stressful forces. Insidious stress is not time-locked to "major" events. Rather, it is an ongoing force that constantly challenges the individual's equilibrium. It is insidious because its appearance and relative force vary across time and circumstance. The effects of insidious stress may be cumulative. This leads to a weakening of the individual's equilibrium. Unfortunately, societal values do not lend themselves to support of this person. Rather the inability of the individual to deal with insidious stress may lead to societal rejection and the individual being labeled as weak. As a result, each person must develop an individualized plan of stress management for re-establishment of equilibrium.

While stress may be either acute or insidious, it is imperative to remember that either type may result in functional or dysfunctional behavior. Stress may lead the individual to greater productivity. He/

she may learn new behaviors which strengthen his/her ability or the individual may become immobilized and vulnerable to further disharmony.

In recent years, professional literature has focused on the prevalence and cumulative effects (e.g., "burn-out") on special educators. This module is designed to assist you in developing a personalized stress management program. The rural special educator who engages in stress reduction activities will indirectly improve his/her ability to serve handicapped students.

B. Designing a Personalized Master Plan for Stress Reduction

The enclosed self assessment and related activities have been structured for use in the development of a Personalized Master Plan for Stress Reduction. The activities basically relate to three domains: cognitive, affective, and physiological. Although these domains are interactive rather than discrete, differentiating among them will provide a useful framework for designing a plan of stress reduction.

To achieve the goal of designing a Personalized Master Plan for Stress Reduction, the following five objectives are presented:

Objective I: Analysis of personal characteristics related to situations which typically cause stress.

Objective II: Analysis of reasons contributing to such personal characteristics.

Objective III: Analysis of personal and professional effects of stress.

Objective IV: Analysis of personal characteristics desirous of change.

Objective V: Designing pertinent activities and realistic timelines for a relevant stress reduction plan.

The self assessment and related activities which follow will aid in achievement of each of the above objectives and in the overall goal of designing a Personalized Master Plan for Stress Reduction.

II. COGNITIVE METHODS OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

A. Introduction to Techniques

Cognitive approaches to stress management require self assessment. Awareness of one's stresses and management techniques is essential if an individual is to develop coping strategies. One must also develop the ability to identify a specific stress as functional or dysfunctional.

Using the activities which follow, you will be asked to (1) identify your stress patterns, (2) recognize your emotions, (3) apply an emotional continuum to your stress reduction, (4) identify currently used stress reduction methods and resources, and (5) identify and practice new stress reduction methods. As you complete the activities, remember that stress is a dynamic force which can be positive or negative. The activities have been designed to assist in development of an ongoing strategy for stress management.

A task sheet has been included in Appendix A to accompany each activity.

B. Idenfifying Stress Pattens

Using Task Sheet One (page 40), list situations, people, and events that have personally and professionally caused you stress. As you list the "causes" of your stress, separate them into short-term (e.g., during the last hour, day, or month) and long-term categories.

Next, try to identify patterns such as the types of people, ways you were feeling about yourself, or environmental factors that were typically present during your periods of greatest stress. For example, did it rain three weekends in a row? Were you feeling tired or unprepared? Were authority figures or regular class teachers who were unconcerned about handicapped children present?

Although stress is typically viewed as a negative factor, much stress is positive. Think about the numerous articles you have read for research papers. Many of the articles that have contained the greatest benefits for you may not have been read if a research paper deadline and grade had not been imminent. Your task then is to decipher which of the short and long-term stresses you have identified are "functional stresses" and which are "dysfunctional stresses" for you.

Take a few minutes to reflect upon your list and label each factor with an "F" for functional or a "D" for dysfunctional. One of the most important determinants of which are functional and dysfunctional will be how much energy is required to solve various problems/situations. Which factors are the energy "zappers" and which are the energy "inducers"? Ask yourself if a particular factor makes your "flight or fight" stress syndrome, as described by the prominent stress expert Hans Selye (1956), produce adrenalin needed to accomplish a particular task or produce such an onslaught of heavy emotions that 80% of your productive capacity is drained.

For example, did a surge of adrenalin assist you in quickly running down the hall to stop one child from hurting another? Did your anger or anxiety level increase to the point where your productive capacity was drained?

Next, label the factors related to your stress as "givens" (G) or as factors which can be "changed" (C). Givens are relatively unchangeable factors such as low rates of pay in your district. Factors which can be changed include attitudes of regular educators/parents or a child's behavior.

From the factors which can be changed, you will need to select one "change" factor. Using Task Sheet Two (page 41), you can conduct a situation analysis for strategy development.

Once you have completed the above, select a factor which you have labeled as a "given". (For example, the regular class teacher who chronically over-refers non-handicapped students to special education is the wife of the chairman of the school board.)

For the "given" factor selected, you will be developing strategies for ameliorating its effects. In the previous example, could you develop a personal relationship with the regular educator? Could you instill respect for you and recognition of your expertise? Could you facilitate sharing of materials that would assist the regular educator with instruction of children who make her teaching difficult?" After reading the following related examples on pages 6 - 7, you will need to complete Task Sheet Three in Appendix A (page 42). It deals with developing strategies for alleviating the "given" factor you have selected.

* * * * * * * * * * *

A resource teacher in the state of Washington began working in a resource room that had clearly functioned as a "dumping ground" for non-handicapped children who were performing poorly. She made her resource room a gathering place for teachers (at first by offering coffee and donuts placed next to indices of learning materials appropriate for non-handicapped children). She placed attractive noticeable posters throughout her room dealing with exactly what teaching materials, including definite page numbers in various texts, were helpful to regular class teachers attempting to work with children with particular problems. She designed informal and later formal interactions in her room to center upon demonstrations of techniques, media, other equipment, etc. Soon the efficient "rural grapevine," one of rural America's most effective resources, was doing this job for her.

Items which her school district could not pay for were used as further ways to involve the general education public in her work. Shop classes, the school janitor, and community groups built materials for students with handicaps because she first asked them to assist in making materials which were needed by non-handicapped children. "Givens" that couldn't be manipulated in this manner were addressed by dealing with or featuring alternate resources or mechanisms.

* * * * * * * * * * *

After openly explaining to an administrator the disadvantages for children of poor facilities (isolation, inappropriate lighting, excessive stimuli, or whatever), many special educators have had to "make do." Astute administrators, however, have compensated for some of these disadvantages by providing alternatives such as special field trips or other events. They have also garnered support from local community groups for long-range improvements or purchase/building of equipment. At the least, many adept administrators have sponsored faculty events in which the teacher with the "low status" environment has been featured (e.g., a demonstration of his/her competency, perhaps when working with a child or by showing personally developed materials at a faculty meeting).

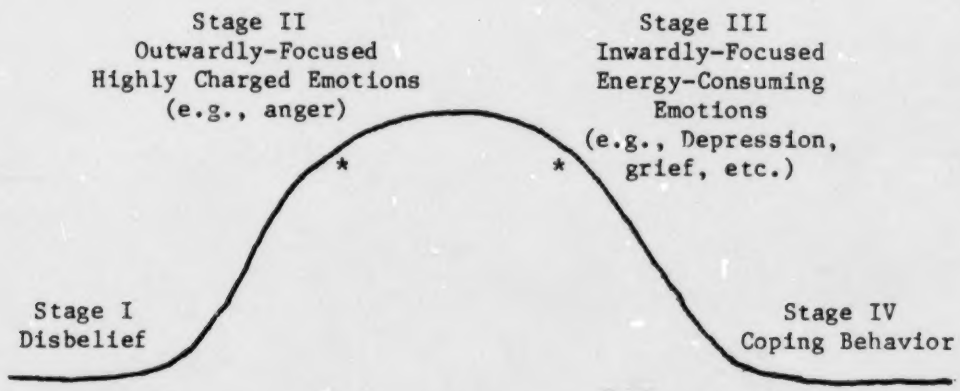
* * * * * * * * * * * *

C. Recognizing Emotions

Individuals faced with stress typically experience a continuum of emotions ranging from disbelief to coping. Figure 1 below illustrates this emotional continuum. Many teachers use the continuum when working with emotionally disturbed children and their families. The framework of the continuum is a modification of the death and dying emotional syndrome described by Kubler-Ross in her book, Death and Dying (1974).

Figure 1.

Stages of the Emotional Continuum Related to Stressful Situations



*Levels at which up to 80% of one's total energy is consumed by emotional reactions.

To clarify the continuum, think of the reactions of parents upon discovering that their child is handicapped. Couples do not purposely plan to have handicapped children. Rather, they typically concentrate on positive activities such as decorating a nursery, acquiring baby furniture and clothing, and selecting the child's name.

For our purposes, imagine that the mother's labor begins quite suddenly, about one month early. The mother-to-be is rushed to the hospital emergency room, and the premature infant is born. As she recuperates, a grave-faced physician enters the room and inquires how she is feeling. After answering his question, the mother asks to see the new baby. When the baby is brought to the mother's room, she immediately

notices that the baby does not appear to be normal. The mother responds, "You've brought the wrong baby!" After the physician convinces the mother that the infant is indeed hers, her emotional level soars from the relative equilibrium of the "disbelief" stage to the high emotional level of "anger". In fact, about 80% of her productive capacity typically becomes involved in the emotion of anger. It is essential that she experience this stage of the continuum of emotions, and it is one of the most stressful stages of the four. Some of the parents of children enrolled in resource rooms have never moved from disbelief (Stage I) to anger (Stage II). Some are perpetually angry. Their stress levels remain high, and this significantly contributes to the special educator's level of stress.

For now, let's continue our example, to fully illustrate the continuum of emotions relevant to your work and reducing your occupational stresses. After a parent experiences the outwardly-focused emotions such as anger at a physican diagnosing the child's handicap, he or she typically becomes heavily involved in inward emotions such as guilt or depression (Stage III). No longer angrily accusing the "other person" such as the physician or genetics of the "other" side of the family, the parent frequently becomes emotionally consumed in inward accusations and depression.

A parent frequently questions his/her role in causing the child's handicap. Some accusations, of course, may be valid (e.g., drug usage during pregnancy) and some invalid, such as wondering if a certain type or frequency of sexual experience was responsible.

Although this stage of the continuum is as necessary as others for real coping behavior to occur, guilt and depression are generally dys-

functional stages of stress. The supportive special educator can assist a parent in moving toward positive coping behavior. The following actions of the special educator may facilitate the parents' adjustment to the child's handicap:

1. Listen - carefully and actively. Your body posture, eye contact, and gestures should exhibit your attentiveness. It is generally inappropriate and irrelevant for you to report that a similar problem happened to you in the past. Most of all, it indicates that you would rather talk or quickly give advice, than listen. The emphasis is on the <u>other</u> person's problem or feelings.

2. Be supportive of the person experiencing these emotions. Although you can never feel <u>exactly</u> like the person experiencing them, you can establish rapport with this person and let them know you are sincerely trying to understand.

3. Offer any immediate assistance available, as soon as a parent is ready to receive such assistance. Assistance might include introducing the parent to other parents who have successfully worked through the Continuum of Emotions or making available special materials, toys, or equipment that will be of assistance to the child or the family as they relate to the child.

4. Do not try to offer an instant solution or to solve the problem for the person experiencing discomfort. In some instances, there <u>is</u> no immediate assistance or an "easy answer." Instead, you can offer your undivided attention as a listener and yourself as a support system.

5. Recognize the absolute necessity of working through the entire Continuum of Emotions, and that each emotion is normal. Emphasize that the parent's reactions to the stressful situation is normal and appropriate. In short, be as non-judgmental as possible.

6. Never push the parents to another level of the emotional continuum before they are ready, but do be ready to suggest that the next level is coming. How many times have you worked with a parent who has never been allowed the privilege of "venting?" You've perhaps never understood some of the parents' reactions to you! Sometimes the most helpful thing you can do is to be the one person whom they can blame. They can be open with you about their feelings and you will still "like"/respect them. The nonjudgemental person who cares unconditionally and keeps all confidences will be the most successful listener.

7. Know your own limitations! You are a teacher and have probably not been trained to be a counselor. Know when and to whom to refer the parents/families with whom you work.

On a daily basis, special educators are involved with the emotional continuum (Figure 1 on page 8). As you read the examples of reactions to stress presented in Tasks Four and Five (pages 43 - 45), examine your reactions to similar situations. Do your reactions parallel those described? Use Task Sheet Six (page 46) to describe a relevant stress situation and emotional responses consistent with the stages of the emotional continuum (page 8).

D. Identifying Stress Reduction Methods and Resources

As a special educator, you may be continuously traversing the emotional continuum just as are as the parents and handicapped children with whom you work. Special educators often strive for coping strategies and equilibrium. Stress reduction is a daily battle, and the more tools you acquire to combat your stressful challenges, the greater your abilities will be to assist handicapped students and their families.

Using Task Sheet Seven on page 47, list ways that you typically reduce stress under Section "A". For example, sleeping, going out for a beer with a friend, or venting to a colleague who always seems to have the "right answers". First, jot down methods that immediately occur to you. Next, review your responses on Task Sheet One (page 40) so that you can complete your list.

You have now recorded your current stress reduction resources. You probably found that you already have many more tools at your disposal than you were aware. Looking at the lists, identify gaps in your resources and areas representing situations that frustrate you. Record these on Section "B" of the form on page 47.

E. Identifying and Practicing Other Stress Reduction Tools

At this point, it is time to review ten cardinal principles involved in cognitively dealing with stress. As the principles are presented, you should evaluate each as related to Task Sheet Seven on page 47.

CARDINAL PRINCIPLES FOR COGNITIVELY DEALING WITH STRESS

* * * * * * * * * *

Principle 1: If You Can't Change Something, Don't Worry About It.

Consciously use the defense mechanisms of insulation and ego divestiture to deal with stressful aspects of your professional life. Isolating yourself from frustrating emotions is possible if you want to do so. It is also appropriate if a rational approach is taken regarding the futility of wasting high levels of energy or emotions that unfortunately will not change a negative situation.

* * * * * * * * * *

Principle 2: Control Your Own Life As Much As Possible.

Clearly and assertively learn to say no! Learn to control your personal time, associations and behavior. You most likely have to be professionally involved with many situations and people that you do not choose. Your personal life is your own. Your professional behaviors will be significantly improved by the degree to which you are non-stressed on your own time.

Even the most empathetic professional in your school who listens intently and offers support to all colleagues functions more effectively on the job if his/her personal life does not unnecessarily include "energy-zappers." Books on assertiveness training abound. Several have been included in the list of suggested readings on page 37.

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Principle 3: Remember The 10-80-10 Principle.

Most organizations include three distinct types of individuals. About 10% are the "shakers and movers" who will grow and develop, almost

no matter what. They are self-motivated, responsible individuals who are generally progressive.

However, eighty percent (80%) of the staff of most schools, like other organizations, are middle-of-the-road types watching to see what the rest of the group believes in and what actions should be taken. The remaining 10% are the potential blockers -- a dangerous sort. They do not want to initiate progressive programs or exert extra energy themselves. Unfortunately, they can block the basic 80% from being progressive. Every organization and community has such gems. They are sometimes viewed as pillars of the community, sitting on the front row or other such noticeable positions of school or church meetings. Your basic 80% frequently look to the lower functioning 10% for directions -- not only when to rise and sit but when to actively support a program or adopt a new attitude.

The astute special educator and his/her administrator carefully note the existence of the 10-80-10 principle and structure strategies accordingly. Energy levels and other resources dictate the actions of adept planners. Conscious of the limitations of each, adept planners expend their scarce resources not on the majority (that 80% who are going to follow the directions of either the "movers and shakers" or the "blockers" anyway), but the upper 10% of the school system.

If you wondered why not work on the 10% who can potentially block any action, good for you! A certain amount of your energy does need to be exerted in this direction. A reasonable amount of your resources may be expended (a) establishing a personal relationship with these individuals because by personalizing the issue you enhance the potential for attitude change, (b) attempting rational approaches such as explaining

the pros and cons of issues, and (c) using last-resort strategies including "cooptation" to keep a non-supportive person from blocking the progress of others.

An example of the latter would be having a hostile peer on the agenda of a progressive inservice session he/she otherwise would speak about in a derogatory manner. This may "co-op" collaboration with you or at least avoid sabotage.

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Principle 4: Plan And Implement Attitude Change Strategies, Preferably With The Assistance Of A Strong Support System.

What else can you do about the negative peers whose attitudes are having impact on your effectiveness? You might want to read a book on attitude change techniques or delve into the literature of social psychology. Lighter options include Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People or Nierenberg's The Art of Negotiating. Pay careful attention to basic principles of attitude change including the following.

a. You will be more successful if you attempt to change an attitude in a way that initially makes it only slightly different from the original norm of the group or society, than if you ask for too much, too soon. Instant change agents are rarely effective -- and only infrequently liked -- especially in rural America where tradition is valued.

b. Successful attitude change activities preferably involve individuals in groups, as peers. If you can structure events in which groups reach consensus regarding ideas or strategies you want to implement, you are home free. At the least, try to encourage negative peers to make a public commitment to support your idea -- or at least not to block it.

c. If possible, plan formal as well as informal self-awareness and attitude change exercises. Research indicates that the affective domain must be addressed for

emotionally-charged issues such as changing one's classroom to accomodate the special needs of handicapped children. Potentially 80% of all behavior is attitudinally based. Acceptance has been found to be the first step toward new behavior. If your attitude and behavior change exercises carefully consider the impact of the affective domain and plan for attitude change in gradual increments, you will discover increasingly positive attitudes.

d. Plan to use the natural phenomenon of cognitive dissonance! Creating a situation in which the person whose attitude you are striving to change has to implement a behavior inconsistent with his/her present attitude tends to change his/her attitude. For example, the mandate that the regular educator has to participate in development of a handicapped student's IEP increases understanding of special education concepts and the student's learning needs. The teacher will gradually adopt more positive attitudes toward the IEP process and the potential of the child when the IEP meetings are pleasant and his/her expertise and feelings are recognized.

   Incorporating implications for non-handicapped students of techniques regular educators are being asked to use with handicapped students is another successful use of the concept of cognitive dissonance. Why not train a teacher to use task analysis with non-handicapped students before mentioning the types of handicapping conditions for which it can be particularly useful? Why not give the teacher time to practice applied behavioral analysis (a new behavior) with a non-handicapped student before encouraging them to feel comfortable with using this concept with a handicapped child (a new attitude)?

e. Using creative programming, break down traditional barriers in structured interactions between school personnel. Teacher exchanges and part-time assignment of personnel to resource positions have been found particularly effective. A formal data base (described in Appendix B) or a more informal system may be used to initiate temporary exchanges of regular and special education personnel. Exchanging positions promotes understanding of personnel roles and enhances positive attitudes.

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Principle 5: Understand The Importance Of Being Viewed As Integral To The Rural Community And The Regular Education Program.

Rural special educators across the country have found that their

stress is reduced when their credibility is enhanced and they are seen as an "insider." Special educators who have voluntarily ushered for regular education assemblies have few problems finding volunteers to build equipment for their handicapped students or to help with special field trips. Their suggestions to regular educators are more positively received than those of special education teachers or itinerant personnel who are viewed as involved with or knowledgeable about only special education.

Even more crucial according to studies of the National Rural Project (Helge, 1983), special educators who became involved in community activities, ranging from churches and civic activities to informal gatherings at the local cafe, experienced less stress. Rural special educators reported that their involvement in non-educational activities helped establish a support system that could be depended upon to assist with personal and job-related stresses.

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Principle 6: Recognize Power And Communication Systems.

How many times have you been frustrated when you have taken all of the "correct" steps, followed all written protocol, yet been told that your strategy or program could not be implemented for some vague reason like "because." Particularly in rural America, there are generally two types of organizational structures. The first is the formal structure which consists of line and staff arrangements. You see those on paper when your school system turns in a grant proposal detailing job responsibilities of each staff member.

The second, and typically most important, is the informal structure which is rarely outlined on paper. This structure is comprised of key

power and communication systems. In rural areas, most of these systems are relatively stable over time. The amount of time you consume deciphering them will be well worth your energy! The following activities will help you identify the informal power and communication structures:

a. Obtain a copy of the formal organizational chart for your school district or cooperative. You can probably find this in any handbook offered to staff or the community or in a grant application of the school district/cooperative.

b. Note differences in the actual operation of programs. For example, do memos to special education faculty actually come only through the channels indicated? Are special educators also expected to respond to memos from persons to whom they are not formally responsible? This might be the case when special education resource teachers are located under a special education director on the organizational chart but actually attend meetings called by a principal or superintendent. What problems, if any, have occurred because of discrepancies between the formal and informal structures?

c. Conduct a simple sociogram such as that illustrated on Task Sheet Eight (pages 48-51). Identify the key communicators in your school system. How do the lines of communication you have observed differ from those outlined by the organizational chart? What problems (potential and real) has this produced?

d. Conduct a simple power structure survey to determine where the real power sources are. This knowledge can be useful to you as you seek resources for your program or approval/ support for your ideas. For instructions for conducting a power structure survey, use Task Sheet Nine (page 52).

* * * * * * * * * * *

Principle 7: Analyze The Implications Of Existing Power And Communication Systems.

Have you noticed how some of your colleagues have had fairly controversial or non-traditional ideas approved? If others were discouraged by "official" power figures, did they eventually gain approval/ resources? If so, what were the alternate power sources they used? Did

they use their relationship with the spouse of a superintendent or with a school board member? Using Task Sheets Nine and Ten (pages 52 - 53), analyze the implications of power and communication systems in your school/community.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Principle 8: Understand What Makes People Tick.

Motivating people is not as complicated as you may think. You can manipulate the components of an individual's motivation for the benefit of handicapped children. Consider the formula below:

M = D + RH
Where:
M = Motivation,
D = Discomfort, and
RH = Realistic Hope.

Your level of motivation (M) to host a workshop on how to adapt regular classroom seating arrangements for hard-of-hearing children would probably be relatively low if all of the regular educators in your school were adequately addressing this topic (a low "D" level). It would also be low if no children with hearing handicaps attended your school. Your "RH" level would be low if the school administrator and/or school board had openly stated that all children with such handicaps should be housed in residential schools. Your motivation would also be lower than the ideal if all teachers in your building had hearing-impaired children who could not see the blackboard. It would also be low if their teachers and your expertise had been denigrated by a negative peer and your administrator.

You can have impact on not only your own level of motivation but that of your colleagues, supervisor, and community. However, you'll need to analyze their levels of Discomfort and Realistic Hope and plan

to shift them up or down as needed. You should now proceed with Task Sheets Eleven and Twelve in Appendix A, which deal with increasing individual awareness levels and balancing discomfort and realistic hope.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Principle 9: Learn To Negotiate For Your Point Of View.

Negotiation skills which increase your success rate will lower your stress level. A plethora of books are available on the topic of negotiation. A few basic principles are listed below and expanded, with relevant activities, in Task Sheet Thirteen on pages 56 - 59.

a. Understand that in real negotiation, there is no loser because everyone wins.

b. Know your "bottom line".

c. Establish a positive relationship with the person(s) with whom you are negotiating.

d. One goal of negotiation can be to help the other party "save face".

e. Recognize the other person's intelligence by truthfully addressing both sides of a question.

f. Filibustering is generally useless.

g. Your real power is in quietly listening and directing the flow of the conversation.

h. State your comments and arguments in ways that will address the self-interest of the other person(s).

i. Be willing to put up with a bit of flack if you really want your point of view adopted or your program supported.

j. Offer support during the implementation phase.

k. Ethically use pointers from the fields of business, marketing, and advertising.

l. Appropriately use humor.

m. Take your time.

n. Structure tension-relieving "breaks" in the negotiating atmosphere.

o. Stop when you're ahead!

* * * * * * * * * * *

Principle 10: Turn Negative Characteristics Into Positive Attributes.

Many characteristics of your school's community currently causing you stress could be changed into positive attributes. For example, a majority of rural communities have disproportionate numbers of retired and other senior citizens who frequently do not support new school taxes. Field-tested strategies of involving such individuals in the schools cause them to become supportive of the community. For a discussion of this approach, review Appendix B (page 68). To understand the concept of turning negative characteristics into positive attributes, you should complete Task Sheet Fourteen on pages 60 - 63.

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F. Self-Assesment Using Cognitive Strategies:

You are now ready to conduct a self-assessment regarding your value system as it relates to the production of stress. The self analysis should include assessment of your attitudes toward peers, students, parents, and administrators with differing beliefs, value systems, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic levels. Use the activities presented in Task Sheet Fifteen (pages 64 - 65) to accomplish your self assessment.

III. AFFECTIVE METHODS OF STRESS REDUCTION

A. Introduction to Techniques

The affective domain of stress reduction is particularly important to the rural special educator. Stress does create affective reactions. Remember the Continuum of Emotions Related to Stressful Situations described earlier? Emotional responses are normal, essential, and can function positively or negatively. Misdirected responses of anger, even when responsible for short-term successes, can alienate those whom you need the most. Up to 80% of your energy may be drained by such reactions.

Emotional reactions such as guilt and fear do not typically alienate you from others. However, such emotions are usually energy-zappers. In fact, many authors label such reactions as "useless emotions."

For purposes of this discussion, it is important to note the potency of these emotions. If 80% of your total available energy is consumed in an affective reaction to a problem, little is left for actual rational problem-solving. The key is to know where you are on the emotional continuum. Approximately what level of your total energy is being consumed by emotional responses? You must plan effective ways to deal with your affective needs. Many of the following affective methods of stress reduction will not only prove beneficial for you but may be used with parents and students with whom you work.

B. Structure Appropriate, Non-Threatening Releases for Your Anger.

How can you release necessary anger without endangering your job, your relationship with a parent, or services for a handicapped student? Structure "venting" sessions with a trusted colleague or friend. Choose

a person who is not merely curious but who listens attentively and keeps confidences. Locate someone who is non-judgmental. Select someone who understands that no matter how violent your reactions or even stated threats may sound, they merely represent your need to "blow off" about an undesirable situation in a risk-free environment. Most of us have or strive for this type of relationship with someone about personal aspects of our lives. It is also imperative to develop this kind of relationship to enhance professional happiness.

In some of the more remote rural areas, special educators often find that no one is available who understands their unique point of view. In such situations, the essential "venting" may be developed with related professionals such as mental health professionals. Some remotely located professionals emote via cassette recordings or telephone conversations with very trusted individuals located a great distance from them. Others mentally or in writing "save up and file away" such frustrations until their next opportunity to meet with a distant colleague. The cardinal principles are:

1. share with <u>trusted</u> individuals, and
2. express your anger.

Just as with parents who have never had the opportunity to express their anger that they have a handicapped child, the professional who "keeps it all inside" is not as effective as the person who "dumps" that baggage and moves on. Each time you effectively vent anger, you free energy (often a surprising amount) for more positive actions.

If the need for appropriately releasing anger can be effectively combined with the development or continuation of professional support groups, the special educator may find an understanding group of col-

leagues. Often the group can offer concrete suggestions for problem solving. The trust factor is again critical; the remotely located rural special educator may have to "save up" for infrequent gatherings.

C. Structure a Social Support Group

ISOLATION, personally as well as professionally, BREEDS BURNOUT. It is imperative to have some type of personal support system unless you are totally self-sustaining emotionally. Even the most remotely located hermit, who passes the winter whittling and playing solitaire, needs smiles or "hellos" when wandering around the rural community.

Most of us, quite frankly, need much more! Your preference may be to socialize with professionals in the field of special education. Or you may spend your extra-school hours as far away from those of us in the profession as possible. You may have a penchant for year-long parties, casual conversation only at structured activities of active groups, or a conversation with a friend on the average of once a month. Whatever your preferences are, structure your environment so that friends are available to you and you to them.

D. Build Positive Co-Worker Relationships

No matter how competent you are, you do not hold every position in the school system. You are not independent. Even if you do not currently need a positive relationship with the physical education teacher, the school secretary, or the supervisor of secondary curriculum, it is likely that you will some day. Rural communities tend to be stable in membership, so some of those individuals are likely to shift positions and work directly with you at a later time. If you're still not convinced, remember the previous communication network excerises (pages 17 - 19).

Mutual support systems are essential because of the natural interdependence of rural communities. It's much nicer on one of your "rotten" days with the kids to be smiled at by the physical education teacher and the head of the secondary curriculum.

E. Enhance Your Attitude

You'll have more energy free for constructive action when you think positively. Some suggestions follow.

1. Cognitive dissonance can work for you just as you use it to influence attitude change in others. If you seriously want to think more positively about a colleague or an action you need to take, force yourself to act in a fashion alien to your current attitude. For example, assume you want to feel positive about the special education director but feel he's going about the job "all wrong" by not telling the administration what special education will and won't do. If you ask the director about the administrative aspects of his/her job and how to change attitudes among regular educators, you will accomplish two goals. First, this kind of interest will further your relationship with the director and he/she will be more likely to listen to your ideas in the future. Secondly, by better understanding the real duties of the director, you'll probably have more empathy for him/her as a person.

2. You'll have more energy to solve problems if you view them as positively as possible. Defining problems and negative situations as "challenges" or "learning experiences" makes them more enticing work material. Rather than dragging into work each day dreading working with an incompetent peer, you could anticipate the challenge of trying to change his/her behavior or upgrade his/her skill. If you really need psyching up, you might talk to yourself about "proving to yourself you can do it". If you can work through this situation, those in the future will probably be much less difficult.

3. You might want to investigate some of the techniques used by salespeople to ready themselves for the challenges of selling. If you've sold merchandise door to door, you know how difficult it is to keep knocking on doors when you've been told "no" all week long. Sales camps emphasize techniques like giving yourself a pep talk (out loud or silently) while walking to the next house. Tell yourself, "I can do it!" You might find it useful to record your accomplishments on paper, sitting at your desk, while the student who has been frustrating you the

most is working on his task. If it's a particularly tough day for you, make an extra effort to keep your tone positive. If you feel you have no substantive accomplishments for the day, you might record "I didn't have an accident," or "I didn't get fired for incompetence". Most likely, even if you start there, you'll be able to think of something more upbeat.

4. Realize you must want to be positive. Although "today is the first day of the rest of your life" has become trite, it is relevant. If this is one of those days that you really want/need to be in a grunge, hung up in Stage III of the Continuum, feel free! It is necessary sometimes. However, it would be thoughtful of you not to inflict your need on others.

5. Appreciate the small rewards of life. It is not necessary for every aspect of your life to be positive for you to be a happy person. If there were not valleys as well as peaks in your affective travels, the peaks would not be recognized or appreciated. You can substantially reduce your stress by finding satisfaction in the smile of a student or the smell of freshly perked coffee in the lounge.

6. Structure your environment for reinforcement. Identify "guaranteed reinforcers" and use them. To be a guaranteed reinforcer, something must guarantee to reinforce you at least 99% of the time. Examples will vary from person to person. Pets are typically reinforcers, especially dogs with tails that wag any time you look in their direction. Inanimate objects such as soothing music or breathtaking art qualify for many. Others have reported success with reading a story to a young child or visiting a nursing home resident who did not have a guest last month. The bottom line is to identify what makes you feel good. Many of you will determine that making others feel good brings you satisfaction.

7. "Treat" yourself occasionally. You may want to set aside a special pot of money to use for a shopping spree when all else fails. Sometimes involvement in one's hobby, a distracting movie, or a surprise trip for yourself can inhibit burnout that appeared to be imminent. You might be surprised to rediscover how hard you will work when you have a self-styled carrot on a stick.

8. Remember your natural defense mechanisms can be purposely structured. You can emotionally insulate yourself from certain situations and distract yourself with intense involvement in hobbies, tiring physical exercise , entertaining books, and other activities you commonly use for relaxation.

9. Don't forget humor, the all-time stress reducer. Have you ever noticed how frequently people laugh (sometimes inappropriately) when situations are up-tight? You can laugh at yourself, be around humorous people, read hilarious literature, see funny movies, and in other ways use this inexpensive tool.

10. Learn to live with a certain degree of inevitable stress and anger. It is especially true in the context of one's profession that there are uncontrollable variables that will cause frustration. It is helpful to take the point of view that just as emotional valleys cause awareness of peaks (and vice versa), most of us entered our profession not out of desire for a constant easy life but a desire for challenge and growth. Consciously strive for a realistic positive outlook that emphasizes problem-solving.

11. Accomplish something. The most difficult part of many of the tasks about which we feel stress is beginning. We typically spend a great deal of time dreading involvement and wishing a task was already completed or that we had more time. A famous prolific author was once asked how he avoided procrastination. He answered that he promised himself he would write one word a day. The fact that few of us can stop with "one word a day" after seriously identifying one meaningful word is significant for us would-be procrastinators. Induce a feeling of accomplishment and potential future success by setting realistic goals, organizing and beginning part of your smallest task - then have Grezelda bar the door!

F. Densensitize Yourself to Anxiety-Producing Situations.

Think of the child who was bitten by a large dog and became fearful of dogs. Parents typically "desensitize" such a child by a structured process. They may isolate the child from all dogs for a period of time. Later, a parent will hold the child and point to a dog far away, saying, "See, the dog won't bite you". This desensitization typically involves parents gradually building up to situations in which they and the child touch the dog and are reinforced instead of bitten.

You can use desensitization to "over-prepare" you for threatening situations. Thus, situations which you now dread will seem less traumatic. Most of us anticipate that things will be far worse than they

become. Use of this desensitization will give you a "back-up style" of handling crises which you have not been able to anticipate. You can also incorporate other stress reduction principles such as deep breathing (a physiological technique) when working through unanticipated stresses. An exercise on pages 66 - 67 will allow you to practice desensitizing yourself to anxiety-producing situations.

IV. PHYSIOLOGICAL METHODS OF STRESS REDUCTION

A. Introduction to Techniques

Popular literature describing physiological methods of reducing stress is abundant. Recommended methods range from traditional swimming or walking, to controversial activities such as megavitamin and anti-gravity therapies. This section will provide an overview of various approaches. The reader will probably want to peruse additional readings in any category to which he/she is attracted. Prior to engaging in physiological methods of stress reduction you may want to check with your physician. The material to be presented focuses upon increasing circulation, relaxation techniques, and nutritional approaches for stress reduction.

B. Increasing Circulation

Most of the techniques falling into this category are designed to enhance oxygen flow to the brain. Obvious and increasingly popular techniques include jogging, brisk walking, swimming, racquetball, and other sports of an aerobic nature. Some authorities voice caution regarding some of these activities because of potential danger to the body. However, a consensus exists that individuals should identify exercises useful to them which maintain their heart rate at a level above its resting or normal pulse rate for an extended period of time. The recommended range of time required differs according to the individual authority. The most common ranges vary from 18-35 minutes for at least three times per week for fitness.

The individual following a consistent physical fitness plan is less likely to be as adversely affected by daily stresses (because of a

better functioning heart, etc.) than a person with a sedentary lifestyle. Numerous studies have indicated that individuals feel happier, more vigorous, and less anxious when involved in a regular exercise program. Basically healthy, well-adjusted people report that exercise actually combats tension fatigue and provides psychological and physiological rejuvenation.

Any individual under stress will benefit from increasing oxygen intake to the brain. Increased oxygen better enables the brain to function properly. That is one reason for the expression "taking a break and clearing one's head."

A divergent, non-aerobic, technique to increase circulation to the brain and to parts of the body typically receiving less stimulation due to the force of gravity is temporarily reversing one's gravity pull. Techniques range from the relatively simple headstand typically practiced as a child to inexpensive or expensive devices facilitating the procedure and lessening the chances of head damage due to the weight of the body. Modified versions of this approach such as bending from the waist to increase blood flow to the head have been recognized and practiced for years.

C. Relaxation Techniques

Most of the physiological methods of reducing stress that fall under this category are designed to calm the mind by relaxing the body. Energy required to implement the techniques varies from that involved in stretching to sleeping.

Stretching various muscles via neck and shoulder rolls and arm and waist stretches is advocated because of the natural tension release from stretching. Normal tension builds up in muscles during periods of

anxiety, sitting in the same position, or looking down at a book or papers on a desk for an extended period of time. Simply moving about is sometimes surprisingly helpful. As a preventive measure, correct posture is recommended so that physical tension does not accumulate. The body does not "store tension" as rapidly in muscles that are carried in the way they were designed to be.

Slow deep breathing is recommended when experiencing any stressful situation. This is partly because the act of relaxing and breathing deeply is easier on the system than "tensing up". The mental act of telling oneself to relax and concentrate on breathing deeply enough to enhance the flow of oxygen is helpful as a "back-up style" or a distractor from the immediate stress.

Another logical step in the process of stress reduction is distracting the mind from present thoughts and concerns. This occurs in various forms of meditation. Meditative techniques vary from very simple to complex, traditional to controversial. Simple techniques include meditation practices in the prayers of many religious sects and methods such as forcing oneself to relax by lying down and imagining each part of one's body as totally relaxed, starting with the toes and very gradually moving to the hair on the head.

Some meditative methods incorporate concentrating on something outside of the body such as some of the yoga exercises involving concentration on a wall or on a candle to free one's mind to complete a relaxation exercise. Others, such as transcendental meditation, involve thinking only of a "meaningless word" or mantra to clear the mind of other thoughts and totally rest the body. Studies of persons who regularly practice Eastern meditation techniques indicate that they handle

stress relatively well. The studies have addressed physiological aspects as well as meditators' perceptions of their mental state.

Methods of inducting sleep so that one can "forget the cares of the world" vary from concentrating on a thought or task of no great importance such as counting sheep to physically preparing the body for sleep (e.g., not eating a late/large dinner; eating yogurt or drinking milk to ingest calming B complex vitamins and calcium. Although sleep has been viewed as the great tension reliever for ages, some of the Eastern relaxation techniques such as meditation have been credited with facilitating relaxation more intense than that provided by deep sleep.

D. Nutritional Approaches

Prompted by "whole foods advocates" and the general public, a growing percentage of the medical community now recognizes the importance of adequate nutrition in handling stress. The body rapidly loses B and C complex vitamins during stress. It is widely accepted that replacing these water-soluble vitamins assists with stress reduction. Inadequate levels of calcium and magnesium are also recognized as stress ful because of the lack of a feeling of calmness. Tranquilizers, traditionally the preferred way of "relaxing" for Americans, can be habit-forming, tend to deplete the body of many nutrients, and have even been noted by some researchers to eventually bring one's mood to a level lower than its starting point. You will no doubt want to delve into the literature to determine your own beliefs regarding the controversies involved in nutritional approaches to stress reduction.

E. Applying Physiological Methods of Stress Reduction

While the previously presented material is by no means comprehensive, it should suggest to you various physiological strategies for

stress reduction which you can apply. List your current physiological methods for stress reduction and then identify additional approaches which you could apply in the future. Determine the types of books or articles in which you can gather additional information.

V. SUMMARY

This module has provided a baseline overview of a variety of stress reduction techniques. Each will vary in appropriateness for different individuals. Which stress reduction techniques are effective for you will vary in different situations. While jogging may help you forget the intensity of your anger about a situation you can't control, recording your frustrations and alternate actions would be more appropriate for situations which you can possibly change.

Likewise, which techniques are most effective for you will change over time. You may find yourself jogging more during one period of time and practicing serious relaxation exercises during another. The main point is to find some techniques that work for you and prioritize time for yourself to think about causes of your stress and practice ways in which you can alleviate it whenever possible.

The more you can anticipate, think about, and plan for the future, the greater will be your chances of inhibiting unnecessary stresses. A number of excellent books are now available on the concept of planning for the future including Naisbitt's Megatrends and Papert's Mindstorms. These books encourage educators to adopt a broader and realistic perspective about the world and to build strong professional support systems.

The incorporation of realistic goals and perspectives is imperative, including the fact that professional and personal life is full of challenges, joys, problems, stress, and controversy. In fact, if everyone likes what you're doing, you're probably not doing much.

Special education is a dynamic and somewhat controversial field involving constant change and growth for the individual with a disability and for professionals as individuals and as part of the field. Although there is much that should be maintained in the traditional values so prized in rural America, there is also room for change. Change is almost always painful and will cause some stress for those in leadership and implementation roles. So begin to organize and implement a comprehensive stress reduction program today!

VI. SUGGESTED READINGS

Time Management

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Assertiveness

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Negotiating Skills

Bacherach, S. B., and Lawler, E. J. Bargaining. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1981.

Carnegie, D. How to win friends and influence people. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964.

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Anticipating the Future

Naisbitt, J. Megatrends. Ten new directions transforming our lives. New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1982.

Papert, S. Mindstorms. Children, computers, and powerful ideas. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1980.

Motivating Regular Educators to Work With Handicapped Students

Canfield, J. and Wells, H. C. 100 Ways to enhance self-concept in the classroom. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976.

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Issues and Trends in Rural Special Education

Helge, D. Images: Issues and trends in rural special education - January, 1983. Murray, Kentucky, Center for Innovation and Development, 1981, 86 pp.

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Kubler-Ross, E. Questions and answers on death and dying. New York: Macmillan, 1974.

Lewin, K. Frontiers in group dynamics: concept, method and reality in social science and social change. Human Relations, 1947, 1, 5-41.

Selye, H. The stress of life. Nee York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1956.

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Sparks, D. Helping Clients Manage Stress: A Practical Approach. Ann Arbor, Michigan: ERIC Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse, 1981.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. Springfield, Mass: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1981.

APPENDIX A

Work Sheets

TASK SHEET ONE

IDENTIFYING YOUR STRESS PATTERNS

1. List causes of your stress.

Personal Stress

Short-Term Causes

Long-Term Causes

Professional Stress

Short-Term Causes

Long-Term Causes

2. List stess patterns (factors typically present during your periods of greatest stress).

TASK SHEET TWO

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO CHANGE STRESS FACTORS

1. Describe the factor which can be changed.

2. List all forces you feel can be used to facilitate changing the above factor. Rank order them in terms of their relative force for creating change.

3. List all the forces you feel will preclude changing the factor identified. Rank order them in terms of their relative force for inhibiting change.

4. Identify ways you can enhance your forces for changing the identified factor.

5. For the two most negative forces, develop strategies for reducing their effects.

TASK SHEET THREE

ALLEVIATING EFFECTS OF STRESSES THAT ARE "GIVENS"

I. Describe in full the "given" factor which you have selected from Task Sheet One.

II. In the space below, list as many strategies as you can for alleviating the effects of your "given" factor.

TASK SHEET FOUR

UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP OF STRESS TO THE CONTINUUM OF EMOTIONS

STRESS SITUATION 1.

You've just discovered that your classroom skills were evaluated as "poor" in some areas by the visiting supervisor. Your reactions include:

Emotional Stage I. You feel this is not accurate. The students and their parents appreciate all of the extra efforts which are involved in your teaching and your work with parents. You look at the person telling you this assessment in disbelief. (Or you look at the identifying name on the evaluation form 2-3 times to make sure it really was written to describe your work.)

Emotional Stage II. You are angry at the evaluator. He/she never liked you anyway and that has been obvious. He/she only spent a few minutes in your classroom, on one of the most difficult days you have ever experienced. Besides, the evaluation format is unfair, and this has been stated numerous times by peers in the teacher's lounge.

Emotional Stage III. This whole situation makes you depressed. It has such an effect not only on recommendations for any merit increases in salary but in the way the principal views your value to the school. What if you have to include this evaluation form in your folder in future job interviews?

You feel a bit guilty that the evaluation took place on a day in which your mind was really on essential personal business and you weren't as prepared as usual.

It's too bad the supervisor had to be there on the one day this whole semester that Tommy was throwing one of his fits. You never have been able to cope well with such tantrums, and that kid can be so frustrating!

Emotional Stage IV. At least this evaluation is only one of several in your folder. Every potential employer realizes that teachers occasionally have an "off" day and that a 1-page pencil-and-paper-evaluation of one hour of one day has little meaning compared to your excellent letters of recommendation and other credentials.

You can always ask for another evaluation and explain that this day was particularly bad for you because of some personal problems/worry about a bad situation in the life of one of your students.

You've got several more opportunities with which to prove your abilities to help children learn. Parents of your students have even informally mentioned your merits to the principal when seeing him around town.

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TASK SHEET FIVE

UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP OF STRESS TO THE CONTINUUM OF EMOTIONS

STRESS SITUATION 2.

You've just learned that a regular class teacher, Grezelda Jones, has been telling other teachers in the lounge that your job is easy. Her statements have included the following. You have few students at any one time, have lots of time to wander the halls under the pretense of counsulting with other teachers, and don't have anything of value to offer the other teachers anyway. After all, you have fewer years of teaching experience and don't have to operate in the "real world" of a classroom containing 30 students.

Emotional Stage I. You can't believe Grezelda could be so friendly to your face and say such a thing to other people. Surely it isn't true. Even if it were, the other teachers respect you and your work so much that they would have immediately squelched her nonsense.

Emotional Stage II. This whole thing that you've found out is true makes you absolutely furious. Who does Grezelda think she is? After all, she actually retired 20 years ago and never bothered to sign out with the school board. All she wants is a 30-year pin! She not only won't do anything progressive herself but is trying to block your efforts with regular educators. It's not fair when you're trying so hard to make them understand that they can do a considerable amount for handicapped children in the regular classroom. She is afraid of anything that will outshine her commonplace efforts. If anyone else in this school system was allowed to shine, her bulletin boards (the only commendable thing she does) would be put in their proper place. In fact, Grezelda might even have to think of doing something different than she's been doing for the last 25 years!

Emotional Stage III. Maybe Grezelda is right. Maybe you aren't a good teacher. Some of these kids never seem to progress. Maybe you're just a glorified baby-sitter. Some days it sure feels like the regular teachers just "put up with" you, your class, and the whole special education program. It's so depressing not to be appreciated, and especially not to succeed. In fact, it's the regular educators that have it made! Can you imagine a room full of kids with at least average intelligence and so few learning difficulties? What would it be like to have a class where most of the kids' parents were capable themselves and really wanted their children to succeed? Who cares anyway! It's hardly worth trying to work with teachers like Grezelda who are never going to change their opinions, much less take time to individualize test questions or the way they're asked?

Emotional Stage IV. Who said change was easy? Remember hearing that the special education teacher who was praised by all was so noncontroversial he or she probably wasn't really doing his/her job? You'd be pretty bored without challenges and would rather work with kids who

need your help than those who would succeed no matter what teaching techniques were used. Besides, these kids really do understand you're trying, even though they don't always totally comprehend what they're supposed to do. In fact, some of the parents and the kids are the real reason you keep on plugging. Some of them really can be reinforcing.

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TASK SHEET SIX

RELATING YOUR STRESS TO THE CONTINUUM OF EMOTIONS

In the appropriate spaces below, first describe a stress situation that you might encounter. For each emotional stage, describe possible emotional responses which would parallel the continuum of emotions on page 8.

Stress Situation

Emotional Stage I

Emotional Stage II

Emotional Stage III

Emotional Stage IV

TASK SHEET SEVEN

CURRENT STRESS REDUCTION METHODS AND RESOURCES

A. List the stress reduction methods you currently use. (Examples: jogging, using a punching bag, sleeping.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

B. List the types of situations for which you presently lack stress reduction resources. (Examples: lack of support in the school administrative structure, unexpected visits from in-laws, etc.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

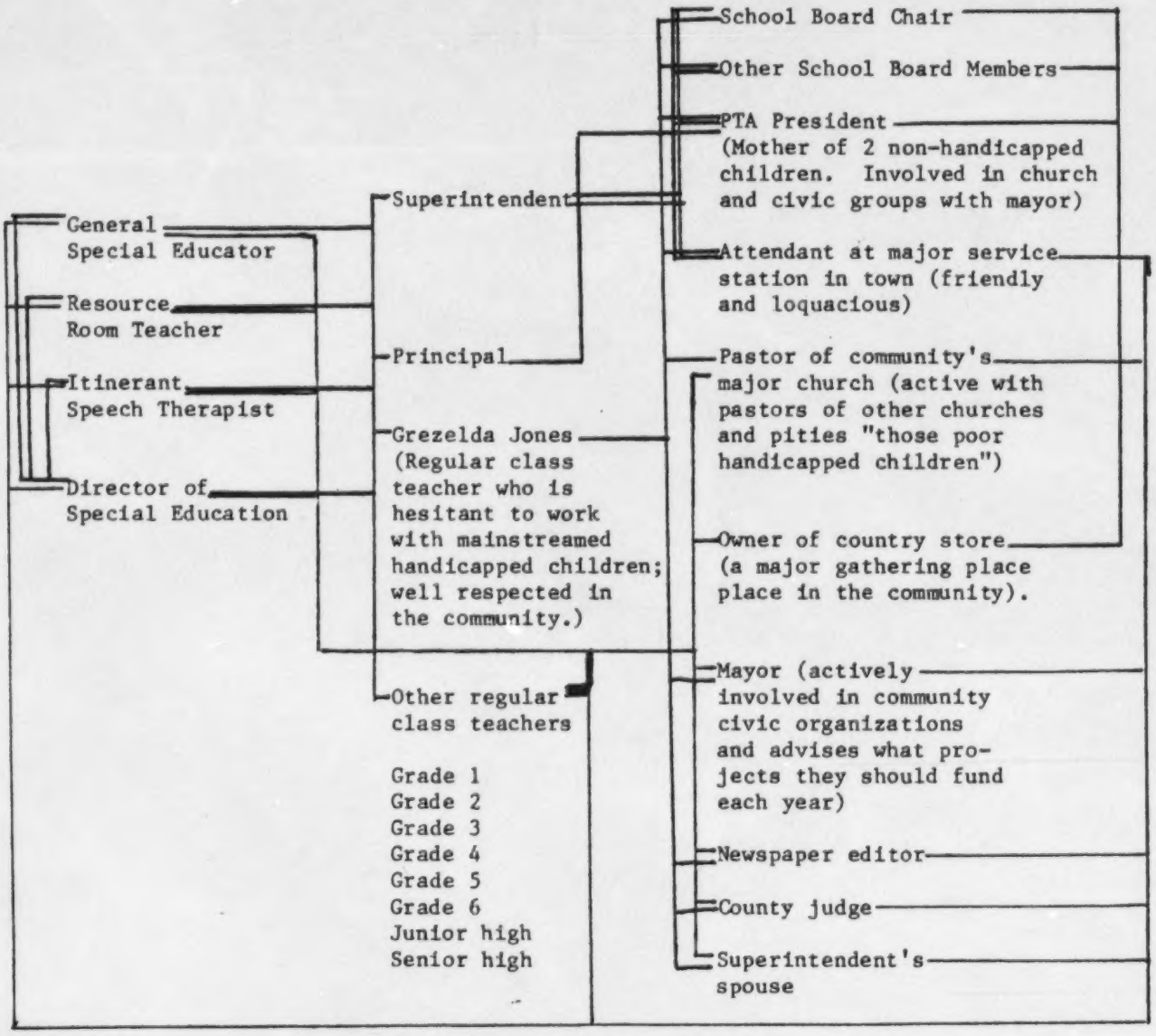
9.

10.

TASK SHEET EIGHT

IDENTIFYING COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

(Depicts Relevant Aspects of a Rural Educational System)


School Board Chair
Other School Board Members
PTA President
(Mother of 2 non-handicapped children. Involved in church and civic groups with mayor)
Superintendent
General Special Educator
Attendant at major service station in town (friendly and loquacious)
Resource Room Teacher
Principal
Pastor of community's major church (active with pastors of other churches and pities "those poor handicapped children")
Itinerant Speech Therapist
Grezelda Jones (Regular class teacher who is hesitant to work with mainstreamed handicapped children; well respected in the community.)
Director of Special Education
Owner of country store (a major gathering place place in the community).
Mayor (actively involved in community civic organizations and advises what projects they should fund each year)
Other regular class teachers
Grade 1
Grade 2
Grade 3
Grade 4
Grade 5
Grade 6
Junior high
Senior high
Newspaper editor
County judge
Superintendent's spouse

*SAMPLE COMMUNICATION SOCIOGRAM

(Depicts Only Relevant School and Community Personnel)

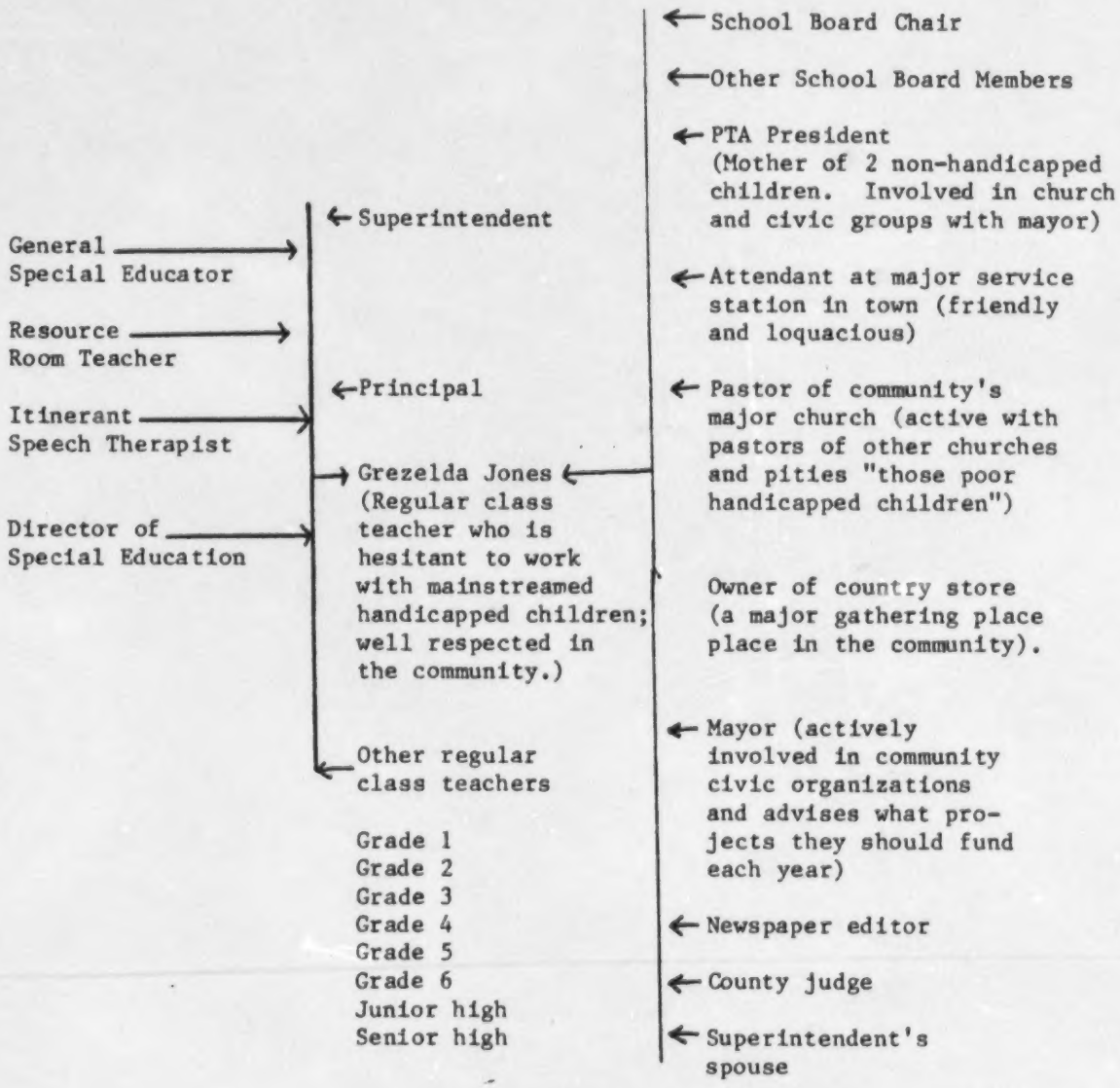
Figure 2.

*Sociograms can become extremely complex. This one illustrates the point that key communicators are sometimes surprising (e.g., the service station attendant, country store owner and Grezelda) and frequently are not necessarily consistent with a formal organizational chart. COMMUNICATION IS POWER.

TASK SHEET EIGHT

IDENTIFYING COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

(Grezelda)


School Board Chair
Other School Board Members
PTA President (Mother of 2 non-handicapped children. Involved in church and civic groups with mayor)
Superintendent
General Special Educator
Attendant at major service station in town (friendly and loquacious)
Resource Room Teacher
Principal
Pastor of community's major church (active with pastors of other churches and pities "those poor handicapped children")
Itinerant Speech Therapist
Grezelda Jones (Regular class teacher who is hesitant to work with mainstreamed handicapped children; well respected in the community.)
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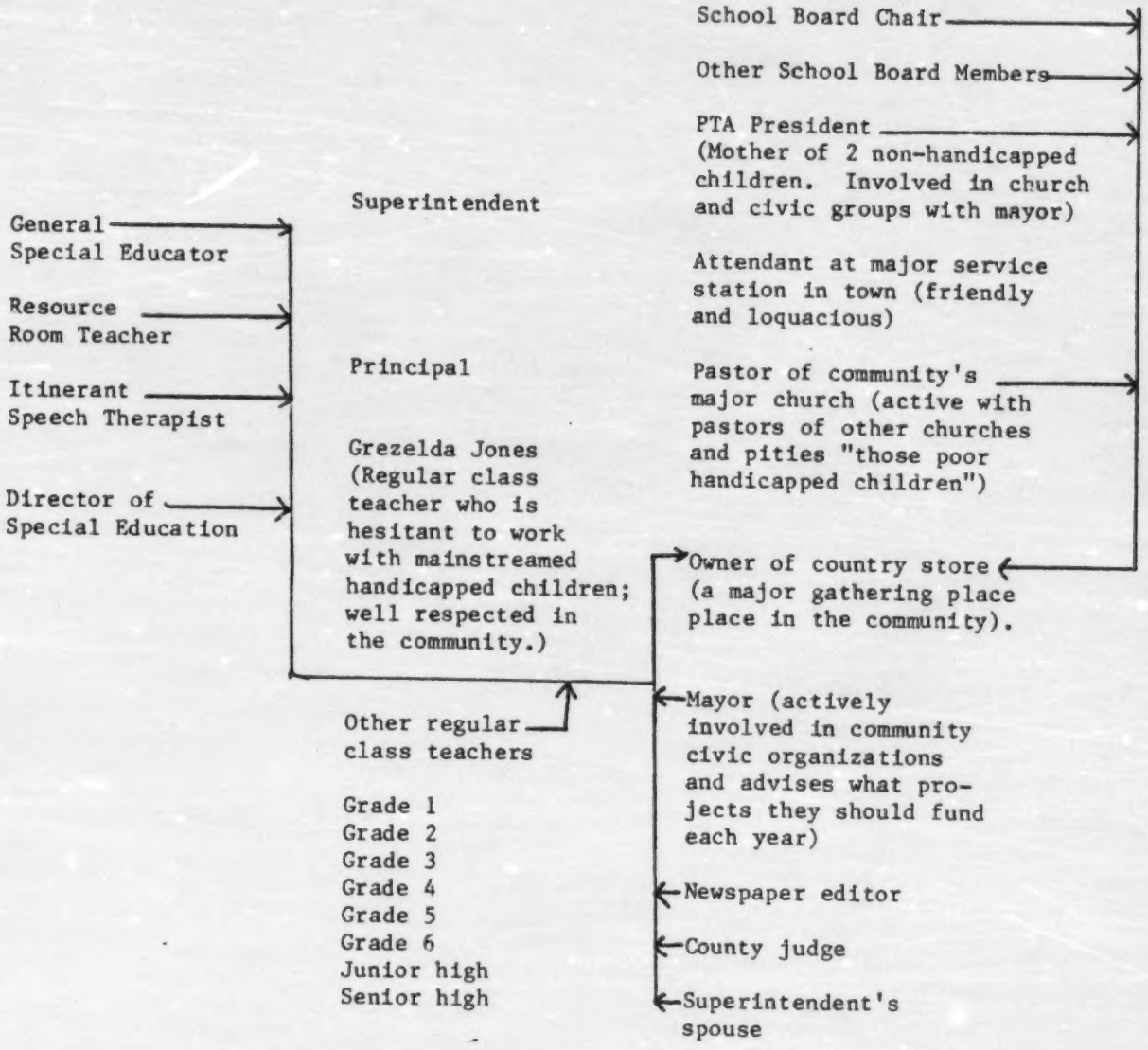
TASK SHEET EIGHT

IDENTIFYING COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

(Country Store Owner)


School Board Chair
Other School Board Members
PTA President
(Mother of 2 non-handicapped children. Involved in church and civic groups with mayor)
Superintendent
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Attendant at major service station in town (friendly and loquacious)
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Grezelda Jones (Regular class teacher who is hesitant to work with mainstreamed handicapped children; well respected in the community.)
Director of Special Education
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Newspaper editor
County judge
Superintendent's spouse

*SAMPLE COMMUNICATION SOCIOGRAM

(Depicts Only Relevant School and Community Personnel)

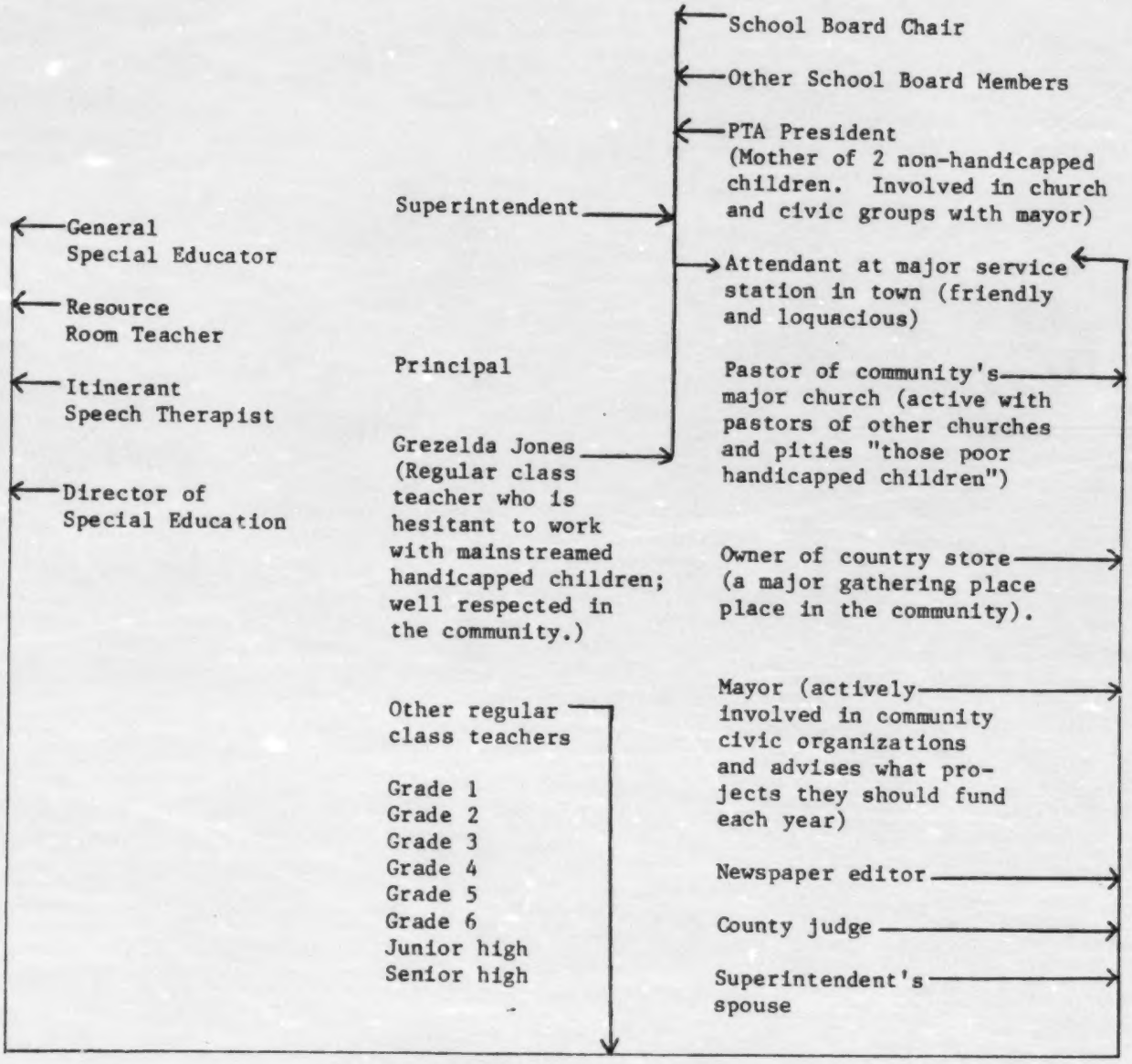
Figure 2.

*Sociograms can become extremely complex. This one illustrates the point that key communicators are sometimes surprising (e.g., the owner of the country store) and frequently are not necessarily consistent with a formal organizational chart. COMMUNICATION IS POWER.

TASK SHEET EIGHT

IDENTIFYING COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

(Service Station Attendant)



*SAMPLE COMMUNICATION SOCIOGRAM

(Depicts Only Relevant School and Community Personnel)

Figure 2.

*Sociograms can become extremely complex. This one illustrates the point that key communicators are sometimes surprising (e.g., the service station attendant) and frequently are not necessarily consistent with a formal organizational chart. COMMUNICATION IS POWER.

TASK SHEET NINE

ASSESSING THE COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURE

One method of identifying power sources that requires time and an environment in which others are not threatened by your actions is the process described below. It is probably most feasible (because of the amount of time required) in a small community. To allay any fears of your colleagues, you could attribute your questions to a class project, research article, or professional presentation.

Formally or informally, depending upon your environment, interview community members. Ask "where does the power come from in this community/school?" Encourage the person to name a particular position or person rather than a nebulous answer such as "the system".

After completing your questioning, return to your interviewees with a statement such as "most people seem to feel like (x) holds the power in this school/community". The local judge, mayor, superintendent, police chief or another individual should be (x). After the above statement, ask "What do you think?".

Continue this type of questioning until you feel like you are receiving fairly consistent replies to your questions. Do you feel that you have identified (a) person(s) perceived to be most powerful in your community?

TASK SHEET TEN

IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY COMMUNICATORS

Using Task Sheet Nine, review the key communicators in your community. These are the individuals who, by virtue of the fact that they communicate with a large proportion of your school/community each day, possess a certain degree of "communicative power". Examples would include the janitor or the attendant in the town's most frequented service station. Knowing the efficiency of the rural grapevine, what would happen if the local store operator mentioned to every person he/she served each day that "the school's special education program sure seemed to be doing good things for those kids".

Next, review the more obvious key communicators in your community. This would include the spouse of the chair of the school board and the editor of the local newspaper. It should be possible for you to develop a relationship with these potential power sources. Find or develop a common interest with the school board chair's spouse. Get to know the local newspaper editor! It is always better to have good rapport before visiting the editor's office and asking for a feature story on your program's benefits or ways in which the community could be of assistance to handicappped students.

Describe below a possible strategy for developing a relationship with one of the key communicators you have identified.

TASK SHEET ELEVEN

DESIGNING STRATEGIES TO USE WITH KEY COMMUNICATORS

Remember the discussion about establishing a relationship with the spouse of the administrator? Here is an opportunity to use that relationship if your rational discussions about "appropriate services/education for Maria" or "fulfilling Manuel's IEP" are not being heard. Swallow your pride and work on having the spouse be the one to suggest that part or all of a workshop deal with your topic.

There is nothing wrong with the spouse's favorite social organization being encouraged to hold an event stressing the effects of noise pollution on hearing. A principal in rural Bath, Maine, used this strategy, and dealt with topics of interest to the whole community (e.g., improving listening skills, protecting the ears, and adult hearing screenings). She "snuck in" the topics relevant to regular educators. Just think of all of your skills of using the local power and communication structures that you can use in such an effort. Examples might range from having some of the power structure do the work for you to convincing the local radio station to air public service announcements.

Develop your own scenario for motivating individuals relative to a specific situation or need.

You have just dealt with one of the keys to manipulating levels of motivation. Whenever possible, let the key communicators you've identified do your work for you!

TASK SHEET TWELVE

TECHNIQUES OF ENHANCING SELF-CONCEPT THAT CAN BE USED WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN YOUR SCHOOL

1. List the types of handicapping conditions with which the professional feels uncomfortable.

2. List the types of learning problems of non-handicapped children which you know this educator handles well.

3. Describe similarities in skills needed to work with both populations. Start with general skills and attributes such as having a genuine concern and establishing rapport. Continue with more complex skills such as behavior modification (which may presently be used only informally), securing appropriate teaching materials dealing with personal care/health needs, etc.

4. Identify and describe situations in which you will encourage him/her to recognize similarities in his/her skills needed for both situations. (E.g., classroom observations and demonstrations - formal or informal, suggested readings, debriefings of critical incidences, attendance at any special education meetings in which particular techniques are discussed, securing films or cassette recordings, etc.)

5. Record suggestions for a plan of action which you can formulate together to enhance his/her skills (e.g., learning task analysis, securing low-vision materials, etc.).

TASK SHEET THIRTEEN

NEGOTIATE!

1. Understand that in real negotiation, everyone wins.

   Inculcate a definition of negotiation that will help you convince others of your perspective or to take an action you advocate. First, examine your current operational definition. Think of the last time you were not successful in negotiating for your program or point of view. Were you trying to convince the other party that your opinion was the "right" point of view? Did you "lose?" Successful negotiators realize that in real negotiation, there is no loser. Although the adept negotiator carefully prepares (when this is possible) his strategies and arguments, he/she realizes that there is no "winner," "loser," or "right" point of view. Rather, each party comes to the scene of negotiation with a unique perspective to bring to Mutual Problem-Solving.

2. Know your "bottom line."

   Determine what you really want out of the negotiation conversation. Once you have firmly established this in your mind, you won't be trying to convince the person of your entire perspective, thus throwing away too many of your "chips" too early in the game. You'll instead be conserving energy for the important point(s).

3. Establish a positive relationship with the person(s) with whom you are involved.

   Have you ever found yourself in agreement with someone whom you disliked and realized that you couldn't openly agree with them because of your high level of emotional involvement vs. rationality? Remember the Continuum of Emotions and the fact that up to 80% of your energy can be soaring into affect, leaving an inadequate amount for rational discussions and problem solving.

   Use an active listening style and attentive body posture to make the other party feel that you are interested in their conversation and realize that their contributions are important to this session.

4. Have one of your goals be to help the other party "save face."

   Just as your emotions can drain your ability to be creative and rational, so can those of the other party. Plan to help him/her feel good about the bargaining session. Begin by making it clear that you feel both of you have contributions to make to the outcome and are on a peer level (if you are). Agree with some of his/her initial statements whenever you can sincerely do so.

5. Recognize the other person's intelligence by truthfully addressing both sides of a question.

A common mistake in negotiating is to assume that if you don't mention the possible pitfalls in your suggested strategy, the other person won't think of them until they have already committed to follow your suggestions. People respect a negotiator, feel that he/she will be fair, and tend to agree with that person more frequently when they feel the negotiator is being honest and presenting "both sides of the picture." The other party will not resist possible entrapment when you present potential positives and negatives of your suggestion, closing with the reasons why you feel your suggested strategy will be the best choice.

6. Filibustering is generally useless.

Assuming that prolonged speeches will frustrate the other party so much that he/she will decide "the hassle isn't worth it" is usually ineffective. Even if you "win" temporarily, you probably will have a co-worker who feels that the process was unpleasant and will only passively enact the "agreed-upon strategy." At worst, you may have unfairly won one of a series of battles. Many negotiations are representative of continuous disagreements, and the wronged person will probably not enter your next negotiation in a positive manner.

7. Your real power is in quietly listening and directing the flow of the conversation.

Negotiators who feel they must be constantly speaking don't have time to think. Infrequent comments such as repetition of words your colleague states can "lead" him/her into a discussion of the points you wish to cover. Self-discovery is always more potent than your mentioning a point the other party should consider. So, listen very carefully, reflect their feelings and guide the conversation such that they emerge with their own "new" ideas consistent with your point of view. A good listener asks questions at times when the person is ready to think out loud about a different point of view.

8. State your comments and arguments in ways that will address their self-interest.

It will be much easier for your counterpart to agree with you if you indicate that your suggestion will meet their needs or save them energy, time, or other resources. For example, the regular class teacher who does not want to adapt classroom procedures for a handicapped student will be much more willing to expend the efforts required when they feel that less of their energy will be needed in the long-term as a result of their short-term efforts. Parents with whom you work are much more likely to work through a difficult problem with their child if they feel that their immediate efforts will ensure an easier life later. How many of us have tried to force negligent parents to dress their children appropriately for cold weather? What if we had stated our argument in terms of their self-interest (e.g., saving medical bills or baby-sitting fees, or avoiding having to stay home to care for a sick child). With parents and teachers, many of our arguments can be successfully

couched in terms of the blessings of a child with a happier disposition.

9. Be willing to put up with a bit of flack if you really want your point of view adopted or your program supported.

   Remember the first highly-charged emotional level of the Continuum of Emotions? Try to be willing to be one of the few (sometimes the only) people upon whom your colleague can "vent" or express anger. Spend the time required to work through a difficult problem. Remember to use your defense mechanism of emotional insulation when you need it! The end product of your negotiation may not only be agreement on a specific point but creation of a long-term supporter of your program.

10. Offer support during the implementation stage.

    Earlier discussions dealt with some of the hidden reasons one frequently does not gain support for his ideas such as a feeling of inadequacy to follow through with the specific strategy. You may be surprised how frequently your point of view will be accepted if people feel that they will have resources (especially emotional support) to adopt a new behavior strategy.

11. Ethically use pointers from the fields of business, marketing, and advertising.

    Negotiating tips are prolific in these fields. This article will list a few. A list of related readings is attached.

    a. Ask several questions which assure that the other party will express agreement with you; then solicit agreement on your "bottom line."

    b. Use key phrases such as "we have agreed that...," "you have been so supportive about...that you'll surely agree that...", "I agreed with you when you said..., and I know that you'll agree with me about..."

    c. Appropriately use pauses. Significant breaks in a conversation typically cause anxiety. This can be used to the negotiator's advantage.

12. Appropriately use humor.

    Humor is a great tension reliever and is indispensable in tight spots in negotiation. Even if you're not a naturally witty jovial person, you can occasionally introduce a light remark and hopefully cause smiles to create a bit of "common ground."

13. Take your time.

    One of the real keys to good negotiating skills is patience. Rushing for closure can mean that your point of view is not ac-

cepted. Worse, frustration with quick decisions can be poisonous during their implementation stage.

14. Structure tension-relieving "breaks" in the negotiating atmosphere.

    Suggest coffee breaks, the need to make a telephone call, or other breaks to lighten heavy negotiations when necessary. Even the most intensely involved persons typically appreciate the calming effects of an interruption.

15. Stop when you're ahead.

    When you've reached agreement, STOP. Don't keep pushing for closure once you've got it; it can appear to be "gloating" and cause negative feelings. Instead, express satisfaction with your working relationship (if this can sincerely be done) and with any potential results for special needs students.

TASK SHEET FOURTEEN

CREATING AND OPTIMALLY USING ALL RESOURCES FOR CHANGE

The purpose of the following activity, Force Field Analysis, is to encourage you to optimally use all resources of your rural area and turn negative characteristics of your school and community into positive attributes. It is designed to assist you in creating resources out of service delivery problems and using all scarce resources as effectively as possible.

Force Field Analysis
(an adaption from Dr. Kurt Lewin, 1947)

1. Identify a goal you have related to reducing some of your stress.

2. Discuss and list all of the forces (events, individuals/groups, laws, etc.) - that you know will help you reach your stated goal. These are things that are now in your environment (in the field) that will be driving (+) forces toward your goal.

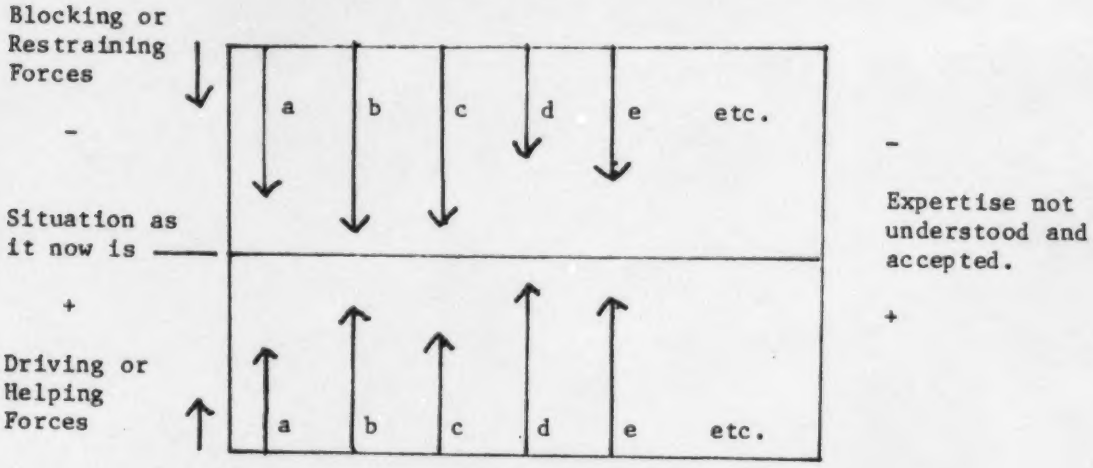
3. Then do the same for blocks or restraining forces (-).

4. *Example: Goal: to become better accepted in this school and community as a person with expertise to offer regular educators and the administration regarding the education of handicapped students.

Helps +	Blocks -
a. Degrees in appropriate disciplines from a respected institution.	a. Being a newcomer to to this rural community.
b. Good rapport with students.	b. Regular education administrators and teachers view special education and regular education as totally separate.
c. Effective relationships with parents of many students.	c. Most regular education teachers think the job of a special educator is easier than that of a regular educator.
d. Friendships with several regular educators.	d. Most special education classrooms are isolated from other facilities.
e. Respect from special education director.	e. A few very disruptive handicapped students have caused stereotypes and fears of handicappd students.
f. Etc.	f. Etc.

5. When all the driving (+) and restraining (-) forces have been listed, plot them on a force field. As you plot them you will need to decide on the strength of each force. How important are the forces in relation to reaching or blocking your goal attainment?

6. Example: Goal: To become better accepted in this school and community as a person with expertise for regular education and the administration regarding the education of handicapped students.



*Letters refer to helps and blocks under point #4.

7. After listing all the forces you can think of and plotting them on the force field, these are your action choices:

   a. take the strongest negative force or forces that you can do something about, and brainstorm all the things you could do to diminish or demolish it or them.

   b. strengthen the strongest positives--(again brainstorm all the ways to do this)

   c. combine strong positives, if possible

   d. reverse a strong negative into a strong positive

   e. remove forces, if possible

8. The best pay off usually is to diminish the strongest negative forces. Start there and brainstorm all the alternative actions you could take.

ACTION STRATEGIES

1. Look back over this list and select those actions that you can take to begin to decrease the selected restraining force. You may wish to select one or several to begin on.

2. On the selection of your beginning entry steps, answer very specifically these questions:

a. besides us, whom else do we need to work on this?
b. where do we begin?
c. how do we begin? (phone call, meeting, letter, etc.)
d. who will do what to get us started?

3. Example:

a. The biggest restraining force selected is: "Regular education administrators and teachers view special education and regular education as totally separate.

b. From the brainstormed list, the choice is to educate administrators and regular educators about appropriate relationships between regular and special education student and faculty.

c. First Steps:

(1) Discuss the problem with the special education director and involve him/her in as many of the following actions as possible.

(2) Educate the administration about the advantages for all students of the mainstreaming of handicapped individuals.

(a) Formal discussions

(b) Structure informal contacts from teaching peers who have experienced success.

(c) Involve parents as educators; also involve pairs of handicapped and non-handicapped students who are friends.

(d) Involve the administration in planning related educational activities for the faculty.

(3) Educate regular educators about appropriate relationships between regular and special education.

(a) Using principles of negotiation, informally approach individual teachers about services special educators can offer to regular educators. Stress benefits for non-handicapped as well as handicapped students.

(b) Discuss similarities of teaching techniques for both groups.

(c) Involve regular educators in planning formal and informal educational activities on this topic, for all faculty.

(d) Etc.

TASK SHEET FIFTEEN

SELF ASSESSMENT REGARDING WORKING WITH THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

1. Describe your strengths and weaknesses in relating to each of the groups listed in the chart below.

Group	Your Abilities to Relate	
	Strengths	Weaknesses
Professional Colleagues		
Students		
Parents		
Siblings/Extended Family of Students		
Administrators		
Community Leaders		
Other Community Members		

2. Outline the areas in which you need to improve and cultures, etc., which you need to further explore so that you begin to understand people who are different from yourself.

3. Describe your plans for how you wish to improve the areas you outlined above.

4. Realistically assess your own strengths and weaknesses and plans for improvement as they relate to (1) involving parents in classrooms, (2) encouraging your peers to optimize educational opportunities for handicapped children, (3) working with your administrator/supervisor, (4) working with parents and siblings of rural exceptional students, and (5) providing parent education when needed.

TASK SHEET SIXTEEN

DESENSITIZE YOURSELF TO ANXIETY-PROVOKING SITUATIONS

The following exercise will allow you to practice desensitizating yourself to stress. You should record each aspect of the exercise on a separate sheet of paper. You may wish to refer back to previously presented material as you complete this activity.

1. Identify and record a situation which has not yet occurred but is causing you great anxiety. Some of your energy which could be productively used is engaged in dealing with this anticipated experience.

   Record this situation below. (Example: Fear that a handicapped child with whom you work will convince his parents that you have graded him unfairly. His parents will come to see you and will exhibit very hostile behavior.)

2. Imagine and record the very worst thing that could occur. (Example: Both of the parents will hit you.)

3. Imagine and record the next worst thing that might occur. (Example: Both of the parents will scream at you.)

4. Imagine and record the next worst thing that might occur. (Example: The parents will bring your principal with them, and he will believe their story without asking you to explain.)

5. Continue to imagine and record what might occur, in decreasing order, until the possible anticipated happening you record does not threaten you in any way. (Example: The parents will come to see you or call and say they realize there are two sides to every story, that Mark has reported to them that you were unfair, and they want to hear what you think.)

6. If possible, role play each situation with a friend. If not, rehearse your possible behaviors by yourself, recording a summary of each action you would take. If you engage in this exercise by yourself, try to be as realistic as possible. (E. g., practice any comments you would make. Try to enact stress reduction mechanisms as you move through each rendition of the stressful situations. Include deep breathing, use of humor, and attentive listening rather than feeling like you must do all of the talking/reacting, etc.).

7. Assess each of your anticipated reactions and have your role playing partner assist you if possible. Analyze first the strengths of your responses, e.g., you didn't overreact, you remained composed, you thought quickly, etc., and then analyze ways in which your responses could be improved.

8. You may want to have a second round of role play for any anticipated event that deeply concerns you and/or you feel you could have better handled in the first phase of role playing.

9. What generalizations can you make regarding your handling your situations under stress (positive and negative)?

10. Outline an action strategy that you can take to improve your abilities.

APPENDIX B

Sample Field-Tested Strategy of Exchanging Personnel and Enhancing Attitudes

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM APPROACH
(Field-Tested)

A comprehensive Management Information System (MIS) to optimize school and community resources and efforts to implement special education mandates in ways beneficial to all students was initiated within individual schools, total districts, and a 21-district cooperative. Processes used in initiating the MIS are briefly described below:

1. Completing a needs assessment at the total school and individual classroom level, using processes that related assessed needs to program planning and evaluation procedures.

2. Completion of a resource survey of all school personnel, listing skills and competencies that may be shared with others and/or used with children with educational problems. Community and parent data were included in the MIS data base.

3. Via a manual card sorting or a computerized retrieval system identified resources and needs were linked. For example, linkage of one teacher who needed to see an effective demonstration of Task Analysis and implementation of Applied Behavioral Analysis with another teacher who used these skills frequently and effectively with handicapped and non-handicapped students. Facilitation of this interchange used a retired teacher, a parent volunteer, and/or unemployed certified teacher to manage the former teacher's classroom while he/she observed the latter.

4. Asking school personnel and community volunteers their particular areas of expertise which were shared with others was a complementary approach building favorable attitudes of those groups toward school leadership personnel. Simultaneously, an evolving foundation of school resources was established.

In some districts, the MIS was linked with the core team and TATs to facilitate their linking of identified needs and resources. Inservice training thus linked local resources as much as possible. More importantly, this cost-efficient system was used to temporarily replace the classroom teacher while he or she learned another skill.

*Extracted from: Helge, D. "Staff Development Models to Serve All Children, Including the Handicapped." The Rural Educator, Spring 1981, 2 (3), pp. 14-24.